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ABSTRACT

The key to successful curriculum reform is a broad-based, systematic decision-making process directed by teachers. Common approaches to curriculum development are haphazard and tend to produce superficial change. An approach that gives teachers a personal and professional stake in its results, however, can generate fundamental and lasting reforms. Following introductory passages, a 3-year curriculum development model based on the above concept is outlined step by step. Important features of the model are three teacher-administrator curriculum committees; advice from teachers at large, the community, and professional consultants; pilot testing by specially trained teachers; formative and summative evaluation; and an unspecified mechanism for sustaining the reforms achieved. A case study traces the application of this model in a laboratory school and reports the results achieved to date. A 14-item bibliography is included. (MCG)

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CURRICULUM CHANGE FROM THE GRASS-ROOTS

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Introduction

The office shelves of school administrators and the bottom drawers of teachers' desks are strewn with unused and dust-covered copies of "new" curriculum guides intended to truly change school programs. Why have so many paper products come to such inglorious ends after apparently so much hard work of well-meaning curriculum change agents? At least one answer is that they have been just that--the hard work of specialists and no one else. Small wonder, then, that teachers feel little or no need to pay heed to these tomes--to use an economic metaphor, no-personal-investment usually equals no-personal-interest!

Statement of the Problem

A majority of respondents to a 1983 survey of 30 school administrators by the American Association of School Administrators responded that sharing in decision-making was a critical factor in maintaining high teacher morale.

A quick review of some books on curriculum within the past thirty years indicates several common approaches to curriculum development. The classic work of Smith, Stanley and Shores (1957)[1] described some of those approaches.

One that is still used in many schools is "the administrative approach." Here, the superintendent is the person to recognize "the need for curriculum development;" the superintendent then develops the mechanism, appoints the committee(s), sets the dates, and reports upon finishing the development.

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[1] SMITH, B. O., STANLEY, W. O., and SHORES, J. H. Fundamentals of curriculum development, Rev. ed. (New York: World Book Co., 1957).

Another is "the grass-roots approach," based on the assumption that all faculty members should be involved in the steps of the development. It also advocates the involvement of parents, students, members of the community and the use of outside consultants.

The third is "the demonstration approach," in which change is brought about by one unit within the school or a limited number of teachers who are dissatisfied with the present program. This approach tries to combine the grass-roots and the administrative approaches, and is frequently used in lab schools.

Each of these approaches has advantages and disadvantages. Yet Smith, Stanley and Shore's main criticism of all three of the procedures is that they "attempt to change human relations and institutional structures by rule-of-thumb methods."

Finally, sometimes in lab schools, change occurs because of a doctoral student from the university and/or a professor of education who wants to experiment with some change.

This article does not advocate nor describe any of these above-mentioned approaches to change.

Curriculum change means social change. The interaction among faculty, parents, and community if carefully planned and directed, will definitely cause social change. Alice Miel (1946)[2] was one of the advocates for this point of view. Other works in social psychology during the 1940's added to

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[2] MIEL, A. Changing the curriculum: A social process (New York: D. Appleton, Century Co., Inc., 1946).

the clarification of this point; the works of Pritzkau (1959)[3] and Beauchamp (1981)[4] shed light on such processes.

Other works such as: Anderson (1956)[5], Douglass (1964)[6], Saylor and Alexander (1956)[7], (1966)[8], Bent and Unruh (1969)[9], Grobman (1970)[10], Tanner and Tanner (1975)[11], Orlosky and Smith (1978)[12], ASCD yearbooks (Foshay, 1980[13]; English, 1983[14]) and many others describe in one way or another the various ways to approach the issue of curriculum development.

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[3] PRITZKAU, P. T. Dynamics of curriculum improvement (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1959).

[4] BEAUCHAMP, G. Curriculum theory, 4th ed. (Icasca, IL: F. E. Peacock Publishers, Inc., 1981).

[5] ANDERSON, V. Principles and procedures of curriculum improvement (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1956).

[6] DOUGLASS, H. R. (ed.). The high school curriculum (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1964).

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[10] GROBMAN, H. Developmental curriculum projects: Decision points and processes (Illinois: F. E. Peacock Publishers, Inc., 1970).

[11] TANNER, D., and TANNER, L. N. Curriculum development: Theory into practice (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1975).

[12] ORLOSKY, D. E., and SMITH, B. O. Curriculum development: Issues and insights (Chicago: Rand McNally College Publishing Co., 1978).

[13] FOSHAY, A. W. (ed.). Considered action for curriculum improvement (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development Yearbook, 1980).

[14] ENGLISH, F. W. (ed.). Fundamental curriculum decisions (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development Yearbook, 1983).

This article advocates a model that could be called "teacher-owned curriculum."

Change of a meaningful and widespread sort can occur if the true agents of change (teachers) sense both a personal and a professional stake in the proposed change.

What follows below is not intended as a panacea; but such a plan, though gradual and time-consuming, has been shown to create needed change at more than superficial classroom level.

How, then, can the curriculum leader in a school, living in the sensitive fishbowl of the laboratory school, go about getting and maintaining teacher commitment and the resulting change?

A Several-Year Process

The answer, in three quick words, is: "systematically and pervasively." "Systematically" because the process to be described involves multiple steps, and "pervasively" because a large percentage of the teaching staff will have some active role.

Let us assume that a curriculum change agent, e.g., someone in a lab school, has recognized that the curriculum and instruction in one particular subject area are in need of in-depth revision. The model for change would then encompass the following steps during a three-year period:

1. Identify the needed change	1. Through some systematic process (staff survey, student interviews, sampling of parent opinion, board-level discussions, etc.), the school's decision-makers agree on the areas of needed change and identify some desired outcomes from the change: the governing board should also be informed of the intent to make this change.

2. Form Teacher Committee No. A.	2. The first of three teacher curriculum committees, with at least one administrator member, is then formed.
3. Committee (A) Writes Rationale and Objectives	3. Over a period of weeks, or during an intensive summer workshop, Committee A writes and duplicates copies of a clear Rationale and a set of specific outcomes for the new or revised curriculum area.
4. Feedback solicited from other teachers	4. Members of Committee A take responsibility within their respective departments to ask for reactions from peer teachers on the proposed Rationale and Objectives.
5. Revise Rationale and Objectives	5. Committee A discusses peer feedback and revises Rationale and Objectives if appropriate. That segment is then "put on the shelf" temporarily while the next stage continues.
6. Subcommittees write prerequisites and activities	6. Two subcommittees of Committee A now divide the responsibility for writing: (a) prerequisite skills needed by students for the new curriculum, and (b) activity or procedural ideas for classroom implementation. The subcommittees then exchange their work for mutual critiquing.
7. Subcommittees select materials and evaluation methods	7. The Committee now subdivides again along different lines into two new subcommittees, one to make a recommendation of materials to implement the curriculum, and the other to to devise a balanced and diverse set of evaluation strategies which can be used to evaluate student attainment of the now-revised objectives. This evaluation subcommittee needs special training in the identification of terminal objectives and in writing specifications and test items to match the objectives.

8. Obtain feedback from teachers	8. At this point, the entire Committee should review the entire document from beginning to end, making necessary substantive and editorial revisions to make the curriculum package a cohesive whole. Having done so, Committee members would each again share responsibility for soliciting feedback from peer teachers, as in Step 4 above. This feedback would be collated into a master revision copy of the document and held until the completion of Step 9.
9. Obtain feedback from community and consultants	9. Now the Committee is ready also to actively seek reactions from representatives in the community (parents, advisory councils, interested community representatives), and from at least one outside professional consultant who has expertise in the subject matter under development. This level of feedback serves the dual purpose of refinement and raising community awareness and support for the upcoming change. If the consultant or the community makes recommendations for changes, the Committee must consider those carefully and revise where appropriate. A disagreement between the consultant and the Committee should be resolved through a dialogue.
10. Revision and Development of Pilot Plan	10. The Master Revision Copy is now used by the Committee to make final changes based on community and consultant feedback. Having done so, the Committee now develops a pilot-testing plan in which trial-test teachers are invited to use the new curriculum and provide evaluative feedback for the Committee.
11. Train Pilot Teachers	11. Pilot-test teachers are identified through volunteers, and are then trained in the methods of the new program by members of Committee A.

12. Pilot Test

12. The change processes now enters the new phase of experimental implementation. The pilot-test activity is actually initiated with participating teachers after a commitment of administrative support.

13. New Committee (B) gathers data

13. At this point, it is essential to widen the breadth of involvement in the change process by rotating some of the Committee membership. Some overlap or continuity in membership is essential, but as much as two-thirds of the Committee should be changed so as to involve new teachers. Thus, for example, a Committee of 12 persons would now have eight new members; we therefore, should now designate this group as Committee B. The first role of this Committee B is to follow the evaluation plan for the pilot-testing, and take responsibility for both monitoring and gathering data about the innovation. In this role, Committee B members would need to be given some released time for activities such as: observing pilot classes and completing observation scales, interviewing a systematic sample of students, and other ways to assess the impact of the change on students from the student point of view. This Committee should also enlist the assistance of an evaluation expert (i.e., someone from the research area of the university's college of education) to recommend and then analyze results from evaluation instruments administered to pilot class students. This Committee should also interview pilot teachers for personal feedback to embellish any written feedback that is collected from them. If teachers who are trained in this process of evaluation are available, they should become members of this Committee; if teachers lack training in evaluation, an evaluator may be brought in to train them.

14. Evaluation Summary produced	14. The Committee prepares a balanced evaluation report (after a specified pilot period of, e.g., 2-5 months). An evaluation consultant may be required to provide interpretations and recommendations along with the analyses of the evaluation data.
15. Revision based on pilot test	15. Committee B now undertakes the critical, and possibly substantial, task of revising the curriculum based on the evaluation report. In some cases, this revision may be no more than fine-tuning or a minor changing of sequencing; in other cases, it may be a significant rewriting. In the latter case, it is wise for Committee B at least to consult with some of the former members (Committee A) to assist in any decision-making which is significant; this consultation ensures that the original spirit of the curriculum change is retained.
16. Report to the Decision-Maker(s)	16. Before final implementation on a school-wide basis is accomplished, Committee B must take the politically appropriate step of informing or seeking the approval of the school's decision-maker (e.g., Principal, Dean of School of Education, and/or Governing Board). Some preliminary information would probably have been reported to the decision-maker during the prior phases. Now, however, full and official approval is sought--a well-informed decision-maker is usually positively impressed at this stage with a curriculum change that has not only been proposed but tested and revised on the basis of the test. In short, a presentation by members of Committee B (and A if desired) will at this stage show the decision-maker that the developers have really done their "homework."

17. Pilot teachers plan training of other teachers

17. Assuming a favorable decision by the decision-maker on full implementation, it is then time once again to enlarge teacher involvement through a revised Committee. Pilot teachers take the responsibility for planning a series of retraining experiences for untrained teachers who are about to implement the curriculum for the first time.

Teacher trainers may be used as "facilitators" to carry out the retraining through varied activities such as: involvement of pilot teachers as demonstration teachers, a one-time orientation by an outside expert in the subject area of the curriculum change, a series of well-planned workshops led by committee members, and one-to-one assisting of new teachers by teachers on a consulting basis (which may or may not require some released time for these committee members).

18. Formative and Summative Evaluations are conducted

18. The facilitators now assist Committee B in planning an overall evaluation of the results of the curriculum change for the end of the first full implementation period (semester, quarter, or year). This evaluation should encompass not only student test data and survey data from teachers using the new program for their first time, but also changes in student behavior and interaction. The activities of sample classroom observations and sample student interviews may not be needed here, although such data always enlighten the interpretation of test data.

19. Committee carries out revision if needed

19. This step is optional, but at some points a third (often minor) revision of the new curriculum may be appropriate at the end of the first <u>full</u> implementation period. If after discussion, the Committee decides that revision is not needed, then the Committee moves directly to the final step.

20. Method of continuing exchange is set up	20. The final responsibility of the Committee is to set in motion some mechanism whereby the changed curriculum can remain vital in the minds of the teachers. The Committee could establish a monthly or bi-monthly newsletter in which teachers exchange personalized ways of implementing the curriculum in some exciting way; or, the Committee may run an occasional once/year renewal or "advanced" level workshop for all teachers to learn further ways of implementation; or, the Committee can work with administrators to ensure that conditions at the school remain favorable to the innovation (appropriate assignments of trained teachers, pairing of new teachers with trained teachers so that the new methods are continually disseminated, and ensuring continued budget allocations for that curriculum). At this point, the formal work of the Committee would then cease.

An Application

One may ask, "Is all of the above just theory, or could it be implemented in a real-life situation?" Let us take one program at the Kendall Demonstration Elementary School (KDES)* which followed the steps mentioned above, with some modification.

Identification of the need: Prior to 1980, teachers were given a list of outcome statements to guide their instruction in each subject. Teachers did not know what to do with these statements. At the same time, test results showed that the students were not achieving the expected level of language

*KDES is a national demonstration school for the deaf and part of the Gallaudet College system. In fact, KDES was the precursor to Gallaudet College of today. KDES has been in existence for 126 years, and serves in part as a Laboratory for Gallaudet's professional teacher preparation programs.

development. Meanwhile, literature and research results indicated that an approach to teaching language known as the "pragmatic approach" would help the students to achieve better.

Committee A: A series of meetings began with teachers at the various levels to discuss these "inherited" outcome statements. Teachers found out that some statements were objectives and others were activities, a very common confusion in schools. Their work began to cluster the objectives until four main areas in reading were identified: Reading Awareness, Understanding the Reading Process, Literary Content in Reading, and Reading/Study/Strategies. The dialogue with the teachers continued, and a scope and sequence chart was developed. Meanwhile, an in-depth training for two teachers was provided. They were to serve as "facilitators," i.e., a link between the developers and the teachers. Other resource people provided valuable assistance, e.g., the library identified the available resources to go with the objectives.

Since the school has its own resources in research, development, and curriculum, there was no need to seek outside consultation.

Training: The two facilitators with the researcher and developer provided training to all language teachers on an individualized basis. One facilitator provided the training, and the other was the substitute teacher for the teachers as they were each in training. This feature was one of the most economical ways to save on substitute costs. All teachers went through the training twice; once cycle from September to December and the second from January to May.

Committee B: An evaluator joined the team and a design for evaluation was then developed. All these steps were taken during the 1980-81 academic year.

Implementation: By September 1981, the implementation began and the training for teachers continued. With the implementation phase, collection of data was in place. The collected data depended mainly on questionnaires and opinion of teachers.

By the end of the school year, i.e., June 1982, the analyses of data indicated that the anticipated results had not been achieved with students.

Change of Course: A definite need for continuous help to the teachers and the development of better ways to measure student's achievement then emerged. The school therefore selected one of the two facilitators to serve as a "resource teacher." That teacher received special training in identifying terminal objectives and in the writing of specification and test items to match the objectives.

Product: By August 1982, a written curriculum guide was completed, printed, and disseminated. Other programs outside the school began to request copies and help from KDES in the area of language. But this stage did not yet satisfy the school's plans and hopes.

During 1983-1984 work in the area of writing began to take a better form and the teachers began to feel the need for more training. In a recent workshop (October 1983) on writing, the teachers gave highly positive feedback.

Reporting: Reports are continuously given to the Dean of the school and to the School Board. Communication of results took various shapes: faculty meetings, department meetings, curriculum news, and the daily bulletin of the school.

The Future: The new printed curriculum guide, including all the objectives, materials, teaching strategies, and the evaluation process, has

now been put into the computer. It serves to identify the objectives for the yearly individualized education plans for each student. It is anticipated that test items will also be included. Various types of kits, tapes, and videotapes are being planned toward a comprehensive program in language. Last, but not least, an inter-disciplinary approach to teaching language is now being planned.

Conclusion: The more one can share with teachers, providing sufficient time for training, the more one will find cooperation and willingness. It has been three years of work, but it has been truly worthwhile, and the change shows promise of being permanent.

And--Dust May Not Mean Disuse

After such a detailed effort at grass-roots commitment, it is still possible that the on-paper product of all that work--the new curriculum guide--could end up gathering dust anyway. But after such a complete involvement procedure, the dust in this instance need be no cause for concern. The very fact of that involvement has ensured that instruction is now different (and, we hope, better); therefore, the paper product becomes merely the physical remainder of the true change which is occurring daily in the classrooms.

In that sense, therefore, curriculum leaders should view the on-paper result as perhaps the least important dimension of the change process if there has been this deep level of involvement; the paper document may only be needed now as an orientation for newcomers and visitors and as a public relations statement. Thus, the moral of this story would be: "Process is our most important product."

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